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**Assistance in mine action**

# Assistance in mine action

## Report of the Secretary-General

## I. Introduction

1. The present report, covering the period from August 2013 to July 2015, is submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution 68/72, in which the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to report on the implementation of that resolution, including on relevant United Nations policies and activities.

2. The report describes the activities and achievements of the 12 United Nations entities comprising the Inter-Agency Coordination Group on Mine Action,[1] which is chaired by the United Nations Mine Action Service. United Nations mine action entities have shown themselves to be agile and adaptable, and they remain an essential element in humanitarian mine action response and development initiatives.

3. Globally, as many as 7.9 million people live in close proximity to areas contaminated with mines and/or explosive remnants of war, and an additional 4.7 million people are at risk as a result of seasonal migration through corridors

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[1] The 12 United Nations Departments and Offices of the Secretariat, specialized agencies, funds and programmes are: the United Nations Mine Action Service of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, the Office for Disarmament Affairs, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the World Food Programme (WFP) and the World Health Organization (WHO). Observer entities include the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR), the World Bank and the International Committee of the Red Cross.

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affected by mines and/or explosive remnants of war.[2] It is encouraging to note that the number of victims of anti-personnel landmines has declined by about two thirds (67 per cent) from a peak in 2005. However, there has been no decline in the number of casualties related to explosive remnants of war, and the percentage of civilian victims who are children continues to rise.[3] The World Bank reports that countries affected by mines are predominantly middle and low income, and that many are currently experiencing violent conflict. The United Nations has a mine action presence in 85 per cent of countries and territories classified as "heavily" or "very heavily" contaminated.[4]

4. The ongoing conflicts in Afghanistan, Libya, Somalia, the Syrian Arab Republic, Ukraine and Yemen are resulting in new contamination by explosive remnants of war. Improvised explosive devices are increasingly being used by armed groups. Those that do not detonate during the conflict add to such contamination and pose a significant threat to communities recovering from conflict, as evidenced in Afghanistan and Iraq.

5. As mine action operators are increasingly working in complex environments, including where armed conflicts are ongoing, they regularly put their own lives at risk in service to others. In the past two years, mine action personnel have been attacked, kidnapped and killed in Afghanistan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Libya and South Sudan.

6. Mine action remains an essential enabler for an effective humanitarian response, the protection of civilians and freedom of movement for communities, humanitarian personnel and peacekeepers. It is also a prerequisite for subsistence and commercial cultivation, the use of natural resources, reconstruction and development in both conflict and post-conflict settings.

7. Mine action is essential to mitigate explosive hazard risks faced by refugees and internally displaced persons while they are fleeing conflict, for example when they cross mine-contaminated borders, and to ensuring the safe return of such individuals to conflict-affected communities and other durable solutions for such communities.

8. The year 2015 marked the tenth observance of the International Day for Mine Awareness and Assistance in Mine Action. The Day's theme, "More than mines", reflected the evolving context and expanding range of threats faced by communities impacted by mines, the United Nations and mine action organizations. On 14 April 2015, as part of ongoing efforts to raise awareness and garner political and financial

[2] Data and analysis from the mechanism for monitoring and evaluation for the United Nations Strategy for Mine Action 2013-2018 relate to data received from Afghanistan, Côte d'Ivoire, Eritrea, Mali, Mozambique, Tajikistan and the State of Palestine estimating the number of people at risk.

[3] Landmine & Cluster Munition Monitor, "Casualty trends 1999-2013", 2014 (www.the-monitor.org/index.php/LM/Our-Research-Products/Maputo-3rd-Review-Conference/Casualty-trends-1999-2013).

[4] International Campaign to Ban Landmines, *Landmine Monitor 2014*, p. 22 (http://the-monitor.org/index.php/LM/Our-Research-Products/LMM14). The asterisk in the following list denotes a United Nations mine action presence. **Heavily contaminated**: Angola,* Azerbaijan,* Croatia,* the Lao People's Democratic Republic,* Myanmar,* Thailand, Viet Nam* and Zimbabwe. **Very heavily contaminated**: Afghanistan,* Bosnia and Herzegovina,* Cambodia,* Iraq* and Turkey.*

support to fulfil the United Nations vision of a world free from the threat of landmines and other explosive remnants of war. I was pleased to designate the actor Daniel Craig as the Global Advocate for the Elimination of Mines and Explosive Hazards.

## II. Update on international instruments relating to mine action

9. A positive change observed in recent years is the steady progress that many countries have made towards fulfilling their international obligations and removing the threat of landmines and other explosive remnants of war from their territory.[5] During the reporting period, the United Nations has continued to advocate for the universalization and implementation of existing legal frameworks relevant to mine action.

### Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction

10. To date, 162 countries (84 per cent of Member States) have ratified or acceded to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction (Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention). I congratulate Oman on its accession to the Convention since my previous report (A/68/305). With the considerable assistance of the United Nations, over 47.1 million stockpiled anti-personnel mines have been destroyed, and 157 States parties (97 per cent) no longer hold stockpiles of anti-personnel mines. To date, 28 States parties have completed their clearance obligations under the Convention. Although 31 States parties[6] have yet to fulfil their obligations, the United Nations is working in partnership with many of these States to achieve this goal as early as possible.

11. I welcome the Maputo Action Plan 2015-2019 adopted at the Third Review Conference of the States Parties to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction, held in June 2014. The 31 action points or commitments adopted by all States parties will guide the mine action community, including the United Nations, for the next five years, and its significance was acknowledged in the conference documents. I encourage States parties to do their utmost to fulfil their shared aspiration to meet time-bound obligations and assist victims to the fullest extent possible by 2025, as declared in the declaration adopted at the Third Review Conference. I also take note of the commitment by the United States of America to cease the production and purchase of anti-personnel landmines.

[5] Data and analysis from the mechanism for monitoring and evaluation for the Strategy of the United Nations for Mine Action 2013-2018.

[6] Afghanistan, Algeria, Angola, Argentina, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cambodia, Chad, Chile, Colombia, Croatia, Cyprus, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ecuador, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Iraq, Mauritania, Mozambique, Niger, Peru, Senegal, Serbia, Somalia, South Sudan, the Sudan, Tajikistan, Thailand, Turkey, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Yemen, and Zimbabwe.

**Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects**

12. To date, 121 States have ratified or acceded to the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects (Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons), including six during the present reporting period. I congratulate Kuwait and Zambia, which joined in 2013, Grenada and Iraq, which joined in 2014 and Algeria and the State of Palestine, which joined in 2015. The United Nations supported States in implementing their obligations under Protocol V to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons, which addresses the issue of explosive remnants of war. There has been increased focus on ways and means to facilitate the clearance, removal and destruction of explosive remnants of war, as well as the recording, retaining and transmitting of information on the use and abandonment of explosive ordnance during armed conflict. I reiterate the interest of the United Nations in receiving such information, which is critical for mine action planning and responses to protect civilians.

13. During the present reporting period, and consistent with the scope of the Convention's amended Protocol II on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Mines, Booby-Traps and Other Devices, the United Nations has supported States by sharing expertise and experience on the threats posed by the use of improvised explosive devices and their effects on populations, as well as on preventive and remedial measures. Discussions also addressed tools to counter the diversion or illicit use of materials that can be used for improvised explosive devices, including by exploring the possibility of establishing a global database, portal or platform to improve the sharing of unclassified information and the establishment of a community of practice.

14. Within the broad context of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons, the United Nations continues to call for stronger international regulations regarding the use of anti-vehicle mines, which remain an issue of humanitarian concern that the international community continues to examine. I encourage Member States to give this matter a high level of priority in their consideration of the effects of mines other than anti-personnel mines on populations.

**Convention on Cluster Munitions**

15. I welcome the continued progress in the implementation of the Convention on Cluster Munitions, in particular with regard to the destruction of stockpiles of cluster munitions and to clearance obligations. I congratulate the five States parties that completed clearance obligations during the reporting period, namely Albania, Grenada, Mauritania, Norway and Zambia. To date, 93 States are party to the Convention. Notwithstanding these positive achievements, the United Nations is concerned about the pace of the universalization of the Convention and encourages Member States to ratify and accede to this important instrument of international humanitarian law.

16. The Convention on Cluster Munitions is a critical instrument of international humanitarian law to ban the use, development, production, acquisition, stockpiling and transfer of these weapons. To date, instances and allegations of their use by States not party to the Convention continue, including in South Sudan, the Sudan

and the Syrian Arab Republic. The use of cluster munitions, which results in carnage, is a direct violation of the basic rules of international humanitarian law governing the conduct of hostilities.

17. The Fifth Meeting of States Parties to the Convention on Cluster Munitions, held in San José in September 2014, offered States parties and the United Nations an opportunity to take stock of the progress in its implementation and to reinforce the stigma against the use of cluster munitions.

18. The First Review Conference of States Parties to the Convention on Cluster Munitions, to be held in Dubrovnik, Croatia, in September 2015, represents an excellent opportunity to reiterate the commitment of the 93 States parties to the Convention's and to announce new accessions.

**Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities**

19. Survivors of mines and explosive remnants of war require long-term assistance from the international community, including the United Nations system, to fulfil their needs and protect their rights. I encourage Member States to ratify and accede to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its Optional Protocol. In doing so, States parties will promote, protect and ensure the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by all persons with disabilities and promote respect for their inherent dignity. To date, 156 countries have ratified or acceded to this Convention, and 86 have ratified or acceded to its Protocols.

## III. Midterm review of the Strategy of the United Nations on Mine Action 2013-2018

20. The Strategy of the United Nations on Mine Action 2013-2018, developed by the Inter-Agency Coordination Group on Mine Action through a widely consultative process, presents the common objectives and commitments that guide the mine action work of the United Nations. This report presents the midterm review of the implementation of the Strategy, assessing progress to date against its four strategic objectives and seven internal commitments. Extensive consultations were held among the members of the Inter-Agency Coordination Group on indicators to monitor progress against the strategic objectives.

21. When the principals of the Inter-Agency Coordination Group adopted the strategy, they entrusted the Mine Action Service with the responsibility of developing a mechanism to monitor and evaluate implementation of the Strategy. In July 2014, following field testing, the Group officially launched the United Nations monitoring and evaluation mechanism, to advance evidence-based policymaking and results-based management in the conduct of all United Nations mine action operations. Country focal points from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the Mine Action Service coordinated with counterparts on the ground and national authorities to collect data. The most recent round of data collection included 20 countries and territories. The information and analyses available provide context, statistics and useful insights into progress made towards the strategic objectives, and this will improve as participation in the monitoring and evaluation mechanism increases.

**Strategic objective 1: Risks to individuals and the socioeconomic impacts of mines and explosive remnants of war, including cluster munitions, are reduced**

22. Reducing the risk posed by explosive hazards requires a holistic approach, including integrated education on the risks posed by mines and explosive remnants of war as well as the survey and clearance of landmines and other explosive remnants of war. In situations where unsecured stockpiles pose a risk to civilians, mine action also includes stockpile management. In the countries and territories participating in the monitoring and evaluation mechanism that had access to the relevant data,[7] 51 per cent of suspected and confirmed hazardous areas have been released[8] to affected communities. Furthermore, mine/explosive remnant of war risk education programmes have extensive reach within communities identified as being at acute risk and in the wider population.[7]

23. In the Lao People's Democratic Republic, with the support of the United Nations and other stakeholders, the number of casualties has been reduced by 85 per cent in the last decade. Since my previous report, less than 50 casualties have been reported annually, which means that the national target of less than 75 casualties a year has been met. Furthermore, a number of countries made significant progress during the reporting period towards completely removing the threat of landmines from their territory. In Mozambique, 97 per cent of districts were declared free from mine contamination in January 2015.

**Mine/explosive remnant of war risk education**

24. An effective way to prevent deaths, injuries and disabilities is to educate women, girls, boys and men on how to live more safely within a contaminated environment and where to safely report explosive remnants of war so that they can be safely destroyed. During the reporting period, mine/explosive remnants of war risk education was carried out in 18 countries or territories.[9] As a result, over six million people were equipped with safety information that reduces their risk of being killed, maimed or injured by landmines and other explosive remnants of war. In a number of countries, including Afghanistan, the Lao People's Democratic Republic and Sri Lanka, mine/explosive remnants of war risk awareness has been integrated into school curricula.

25. Effective mine/explosive remnants of war risk education relies on accurate survey and consultation with communities at risk. In Myanmar, the United Nations supported a knowledge, attitude and practice survey on the impact of mines/explosive remnants of war in the south-east, including at 30 camps in Kachin. The results showed that drivers of conflict and poverty reinforce risk-taking behaviour, highlighting the need for the development of peacebuilding and livelihood initiatives in addition to the risk education programmes.

[7] Data and analysis from the mechanism for monitoring and evaluation for the Strategy of the United Nations on Mine Action 2013-2018. The countries and territories that had access to this data were: the Abyei Area, Afghanistan, Côte d'Ivoire, Egypt, Mali, Mozambique, the State of Palestine, Somalia, South Sudan, the Sudan, Tajikistan and Western Sahara.

[8] "Release" refers to land suspected by communities to be contaminated that is declared safe and released through a process of survey, clearance or a combination of both.

[9] Albania, Afghanistan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cambodia, the Central African Republic, the Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Eritrea, Jordan, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Libya, Mali, Somalia, South Sudan, the Sudan, Western Sahara and Yemen.

**Land release through survey**

26. Land release[8] through survey is the first crucial step towards defining the threat posed by explosive hazards. This process, which is widely used by the United Nations in collaboration with demining organizations, can release land that communities fear is contaminated in an efficient and cost-effective manner. The information collected provides the basis for developing a prioritized clearance plan. In 2013, the United Nations launched the first non-technical survey in Colombia, a country where, as reported by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, at least 30,980 civilians were affected by mobility restrictions and access constraints caused by explosive remnants of war since 2013. The survey enabled communities to safely use land that they feared was contaminated and allowed the mapping suspected hazardous areas in several municipalities. The findings were incorporated into local development plans, attracting broader national initiatives that stimulated the local economy and fostered socioeconomic and rural development in support of regional peace sustainment.

27. In the Abyei Area of the Sudan, the United Nations surveyed 150 communities and released almost 2.5 square kilometres of land, allowing for the safe return of internally displaced people.

28. Through its assistance to the Cambodian Mine Action Centre, the United Nations supported the release of over 50 square kilometres of land, more than half of which was released through survey. To date, 82 per cent of the released land is being used for agricultural purposes, and 18 per cent provides safe access to community resources such as schools, water points and woodlands. In the Lao People's Democratic Republic, the national mine action authority, with the support of the United Nations, introduced a new survey methodology that resulted in a sharp increase in the amount of land being released. This has led to an improved focus of clearance resources on areas with confirmed contamination, as evidenced by an increase of over 460 per cent in the number of explosive remnants of war removed per hectare. In Yemen, 68.5 square kilometres of suspected land was surveyed, and 8.3 square kilometres of confirmed contaminated land was identified.

**Land release through clearance**

29. When the location and extent of explosive hazard contamination has been accurately determined, land release through clearance is required to eliminate the risk of death and injury to populations. In Tajikistan, over 4.3 square kilometres of contaminated land was released following clearance, leading to the destruction of 11,400 anti-personnel landmines and providing communities with opportunities for economic development such as cultivation, animal grazing and fishing. In Western Sahara, water sources are scarce and nomadic communities are at risk of mine accidents when travelling long distances in search of water. In the past two years, United Nations partners released over half a million square metres of land east of the berm that divides the territory, allowing communities to access water safely. In Yemen, the national mine action programme, supported by the United Nations, collected and destroyed 2,520 mines and explosive remnants of war prior to the current conflict.

30. Impressive progress has been achieved even in countries with ongoing conflicts, for example, in Afghanistan, where the United Nations coordinated the clearance of 1,631 minefields and 98 battlefields, resulting in 359 communities

being declared free from the threat of mines and explosive remnants of war, and in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, where the United Nations and its partners cleared approximately 12.5 per cent of suspected hazardous areas reported in the 2013 national landmine contamination survey.

31. In South Sudan, despite the conflict that has been ongoing since December 2013, 2,280 suspected hazardous areas were cleared, and more than 2,000 km of road surveyed for contamination. As a result, 1,808 anti-personnel mines, 745 anti-tank mines and 31,135 explosive remnants of war were destroyed, reducing the risk posed to communities, peacekeepers and humanitarian workers. In addition, the United Nations deactivated and destroyed weapons and ammunition collected at protection of civilians sites, resulting in the destruction of 270 small arms and light weapons and more than 18,000 rounds of ammunition and other weapons, thus contributing to the safety and security of those fleeing the fighting.

**Stockpile management**

32. The Strategy of the United Nations on Mine Action 2013-2018 also notes the emerging and growing threat to civilians posed by unsafe and unsecured ammunition stockpiles. As a result, the United Nations has increasingly provided preventive and responsive measures aimed at avoiding accidental detonations, which can lead to civilian casualties. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, following the destruction of all cluster munition stockpiles, United Nations support now focuses on stockpile reduction and physical security and stockpile management. As a result, 1,500 tons of unsafe items have been disposed of in the past two years, and the pace of munitions destruction has increased from 40 tons per month in 2014 to 180 tons per month in 2015.

33. The United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) is working with national authorities to implement an effective ammunition management programme. Following the identification of 80 tons of unsecured ammunition within the city limits of Bangui, safe and secure temporary storage facilities have been constructed outside the city to reduce the risk to civilians. A further 25 police and military sites have been assessed for future rehabilitation and construction.

34. In Albania, explosive remnants of war continue to pose a threat to civilians, particularly around ammunition storage sites. The United Nations assists the Albanian Government in coordinating and monitoring the clearance of these "hotspots". To date, 7 of the 19 identified hotspots have been cleared through the destruction of more than 34,000 explosive remnants of war and small arms ammunition. Similarly, in Libya, the United Nations worked with partners to clear over 1.8 square kilometres of land surrounding damaged ammunition storage areas, one of the main explosive hazard threats to civilians in the aftermath of the 2011 conflict. The United Nations continues to respond to requests to assist in the prevention of future incidents of this nature.

**Rapid response to humanitarian emergencies**

35. A rapid and effective United Nations mine action capacity is a vital enabler for humanitarian responses. During the current reporting period, I have seen the United Nations prove its value in this area time and again.

36. In July 2014, the Secretary-General called on the Mine Action Service to immediately deploy to Gaza to safely secure and handle explosive hazards reportedly being stored in United Nations schools. Experts deployed four days later and their work resulted in the clearance of 214 sites, enabling vital humanitarian and socioeconomic activities. Within three weeks of the ceasefire, every school affected by the conflict was declared safe in time for the start of the new academic year. During this period, the Mine Action Service conducted over 100 explosive remnants of war risk assessments in schools administered by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East and the Palestinian Authority, which provide education to tens of thousands of children. In addition, clearance allowed for a resumption of power and water supply and safe passage for civilians, United Nations personnel and humanitarian workers.

37. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, during the serious floods in May 2014, UNDP and UNICEF immediately responded to the request of the Government that they initiate an emergency response to limit the risk of accidents resulting from landmines displaced in debris and landslides. The response included emergency clearance, risk awareness and marking of at-risk areas. It also included the strengthening of an integrated response within the frameworks of mine action and disaster risk management, increasing the resilience of at-risk communities. In 2013, floods in Cambodia also unearthed deeply buried landmines contributing to increased contamination. These events demonstrate both the long-term impact of landmines and the need for affected countries to develop cost-effective and sustainable capacities to respond to threats.

38. In Ukraine, since the beginning of hostilities, 109 children have been injured and 42 killed by landmines or explosive remnants of war in the Donetsk and Luhansk regions in the eastern part of the country. Amid the ongoing conflict, UNICEF worked with local authorities and partners to launch a mine/explosive remnants of war risk education campaign to improve the safety of over 200,000 children and produced videos and materials for training teachers, school psychologists and community leaders. Monitoring and data analysis for mine and explosive remnants of war related incidents are now integrated into the existing national health and injury surveillance system. In May 2015, the humanitarian country team established a mine action sub-cluster to lead and coordinate the response. To date, humanitarian organizations have reached 260,000 women, girls, boys and men with mine/explosive remnants of war risk education activities.

**Ongoing armed conflicts**

39. Regrettably, the reporting period has been marked by the onset and increase in the number of violent armed conflicts, resulting in increased explosive hazard threats to civilians. The use of conventional explosive weapons in populated areas has had devastating consequences. Not only are countless civilians being maimed and killed, but the legacy of explosive remnants of war contamination poses a deadly threat in conflict and post-conflict settings.

40. At the request of my Special Representative in Iraq and with my support, the Mine Action Service has recently initiated technical support to respond to the threat of explosive remnants of war, including improvised explosive devices. These explosive hazards result in civilian casualties on a daily basis, hampering the return

and other durable solutions for internally displaced persons and impeding access for humanitarian workers.

41. In response to the increasing threat posed in Mali by explosive remnants of war, including improvised explosive devices, the United Nations produced specifically adapted mine/explosive remnants of war risk education tools to protect civilians. Where humanitarian workers have limited access, peacekeepers were able to distribute these tools to affected communities. In Somalia, the United Nations recruited men and women from communities along the border between Somalia and Ethiopia to help define the scale of explosive hazards and promote stabilization by providing employment in areas recovered from Al-Shabaab.

42. In the Syrian Arab Republic, the United Nations was able to reach over 270,000 children and community members with mine/explosive remnants of war risk education through a joint project with the Ministry of Education. In southern Turkey, the United Nations promoted explosive remnants of war risk awareness for humanitarian workers travelling into the Syrian Arab Republic, produced thousands of leaflets in Arabic and Kurdish and trained Syrian grassroots organizations to deliver risk awareness training in the northern part of the country, reaching almost 3,000 people, more than two-thirds of whom were children.

43. In Yemen, the United Nations supported the national mine action authority in developing a short-term emergency response plan, including through the marking and clearance of explosive remnants of war in populated areas, urgent medical support to victims and support to other humanitarian field missions through the deployment of explosive ordnance disposal experts. However, despite the declaration of a level 3 humanitarian emergency, the lack of access to and information on contaminated areas hampered the deployment of an emergency humanitarian mine action response. I call on those States in a position to do so to share this vital information on explosive remnants of war with the United Nations so that humanitarian assistance efforts are not hindered or blocked by contamination from explosive devices.

**Strategic objective 2: Comprehensive support is provided by national and international actors to mine and explosive remnants of war victims within broader responses to injury and disability**

44. The United Nations provides support to affected States and communities across all six pillars of victim[10] assistance, namely: (a) data collection; (b) emergency and continuing medical care; (c) physical and other rehabilitation; (d) psychological and psychosocial support; and (e) social and (f) economic inclusion and the establishment, enforcement and implementation of relevant laws and public policies.

45. Victim assistance is one of the areas most frequently identified as a capacity development need.[5] The United Nations, complementing national efforts and

[10] The term "victim" refers to a person who has suffered physical, emotional and psychological injury, economic loss or substantial impairment of their fundamental rights through acts or omissions related to the use of mines or the presence of explosive remnants of war. Victims include directly affected individuals, including survivors, their families and communities affected by mines and explosive remnants of war. The term "survivor" refers to a person who was harmed or injured as a result of a mine, explosive remnants of war or cluster munition accident and has survived the accident.

working in cooperation with partners, provides victim assistance support in nine programmes reporting under the Monitoring and Evaluation Mechanism. Support is provided most frequently in the area of livelihood support/economic reintegration and social inclusion, but also in psychosocial support, physical rehabilitation care and both emergency and continuing medical care.[5]

46. Data collection and analysis is a crucial aspect of victim assistance. The United Nations recently helped the Egyptian mine action programme to develop a database of mine victims and assisted in the development of a survivor tracking system in the Lao People's Democratic Republic. This is an essential step towards ensuring the rights of cluster munition survivors in compliance with the national strategy, Millennium Development Goal 9 and article 5 of the Convention on Cluster Munitions.

47. The right to rehabilitation is critical to survivors of accidents involving mines and explosive remnants of war. In northern Mali, the United Nations provided 150 survivors with physical rehabilitation services, including assistive devices, and before the current conflict in Yemen, the United Nations provided medical support and rehabilitation to 1,499 survivors from 100 affected communities across the country.

48. In Afghanistan, the United Nations supports services that provided 12,588 people with physical rehabilitation, including through prosthetics provision and training in the use of assistive devices; vocational training for 5,638 people, including in mobile telephone repair, tailoring and computer literacy; and psychosocial support to 2,326 people, including through peer-to-peer counselling. Furthermore, three advisers are embedded within the Ministries of Public Health, Education and Labour, Social Affairs, Martyrs and the Disabled.

49. The United Nations works closely with government counterparts and civil society to address economic and social inclusion. In Colombia, the United Nations works with the Government to develop and implement strategies for the socioeconomic reintegration of survivors and their families through media campaigns, information dissemination and the strengthening of survivor networks to provide access to psychosocial support and assistive mobility devices. In the Sudan, the United Nations provided physical rehabilitation and socioeconomic reintegration services to 150 persons with disabilities, including survivors of mine accidents. In South Sudan, the United Nations supported more than 100 survivors with training and small grants, following the development of appropriate business plans and has improved accessibility to health centres and livelihood service providers.

50. In terms of national laws, regulations and policies, a key objective at the global level during this reporting period has been the revision of the United Nations victim assistance policy. In 59 per cent of the countries and territories contributing to the monitoring and evaluation mechanism, a disability policy or plan of action has been established that includes a provision for survivors and victims of mines/explosive remnants of war.[5] In Albania, the United Nations supported the Government in developing a national plan compliant with international obligations, including a nationwide needs assessment of the socioeconomic and medical needs of marginalized victims of explosive remnants of war. In Cambodia, the United Nations assisted the Government in developing the national disability strategic plan 2014-2018, which will be supported by the disability rights initiative programme promoted by UNDP, UNICEF and the World Health Organization.

**Strategic objective 3: The transfer of mine action functions to national actors is accelerated, with national capacity to fulfil mine action responsibilities increased**

51. The United Nations is committed to capacity development and the transfer of mine action responsibilities to national authorities. Two crucial elements in assessing such a transfer to national actors are the development of a national mine action strategy and the provision for mine action in the national budget. Among countries participating in the monitoring and evaluation mechanism, all of which receive United Nations mine action support, 59 per cent have developed a national mine action strategy and a national budget for mine action.[5] Furthermore, 61 per cent of these countries initiated plans for the transition to national ownership, and 45 per cent of those transition plans include a monitoring process.

52. During the reporting period, progress has been made towards the transfer of mine action tasks to national actors. In Afghanistan, which hosts the largest humanitarian mine action programme in the world, only four international United Nations staff work alongside Afghan nationals towards achievement of the goals of the national plan. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, the national authority now manages all mine action planning and operations, while the United Nations provides strategic advice and emergency support, when requested. As the transfer of mine action functions progresses, regular assessments and strategy adjustments are necessary to ensure sustainable results. In the Lao People's Democratic Republic, a capacity assessment of both the national authority and the United Nations was conducted in 2014, and medium- and long-term strategies for both organizations agreed.

53. Upon request, the United Nations provides national authorities with expertise to assist in the development of technical and operational mine action frameworks and strategies. In Yemen, the United Nations provides technical expertise to support the development of a new mine action strategy that reflects the changing context. In Colombia, the United Nations advised the Government on the development of a regulatory, technical and operational framework for humanitarian demining and assisted the National Mine Action Authority in developing national standards, quality management systems, including for the accreditation of operators, and standard operating procedures for humanitarian demining. The United Nations also provided technical assistance to the drafting of the Colombian national plan on mine action, which resulted in the inclusion of elements on mine action in 11 instruments of departmental policy and 27 instruments at the municipal level.

54. In Somalia, the United Nations supports the establishment of a federal government institution for explosive hazard management, endorsed by presidential decree in August 2013. In addition, the United Nations has supported the Somali police force in establishing the country's first improvised explosive device defeat capacity and 11 Somali police explosive ordnance disposal teams to act as first responders to explosive hazards in major cities. As one of the only national security institutions operating outside Mogadishu, the teams have destroyed more than 2,000 explosive items that posed a hazard to the local populations. Altogether, hazard and weapons/ammunition management assistance has become a major aspect of United Nations field work, in particular the work undertaken by the Mine Action Service.

55. The speed and progress of the transfer of United Nations programmes to national management can be increased through South-South cooperation, which provides an excellent impetus for national programmes to exchange experiences and best practices. I commend United Nations mine action actors for their continued

efforts in this regard, including the mission organized by the United Nations for the Tajik national mine action authority to the national mine action authority in Jordan. The mission focused on the use of microloans to assist survivors, within the context of Islamic finance principles, as well as advocacy for persons with disabilities, including survivors of mines/explosive remnants of war. Through the provision of technical expertise and training packages, the United Nations has also supported regional centres such as the Centre de formation au déminage humanitaire in Benin, which provide opportunities for South-South cooperation at the regional level.

**Strategic objective 4: Mine action is promoted and integrated in multilateral instruments and frameworks as well as national plans and legislation**

56. The Monitoring and Evaluation Mechanism[5] confirms that 68 per cent of affected countries are States parties to the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention and that 77 per cent of those with a United Nations presence are States parties. While 48 per cent of affected countries are States parties to the Convention on Cluster Munitions, this figure is 69 per cent among countries with a United Nations mine action presence.

57. I attach great importance to compliance with international humanitarian law and reiterate the United Nations commitment to supporting States in this regard. In 2015, the United Nations supported the efforts of the national authority in Mali in reporting on its compliance with amended Protocol II to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons. In South Sudan, the United Nations supported the drafting of the national authority's annual transparency report on the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention.

58. The development of plans and strategies to implement multinational frameworks related to mine action is a crucial aspect of the United Nations work in a number of countries. I welcome the launch by the African Union in April 2014 of its Mine Action and Explosive Remnants of War Strategic Framework, which is a significant initiative developed in close partnership with the United Nations. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the national transition and capacity-building plan and the national mine action strategic plan 2012-2016, elaborated with United Nations assistance, aim to achieve the national goals required under the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Treaty. In Cambodia, the United Nations supported the work of the national authority in developing its strategic action plan to ensure resources were effectively allocated according to national priorities, as defined by local planning processes.

59. The inclusion of mine action in broader national plans has also been achieved in a number of countries. In Colombia, close cooperation with mine action experts allowed for mine action to be integrated into a range of national plans. For example, a report presented to Congress in August 2014 on the implementation of the Victims and Land Restitution Law highlighted the importance of mine action for creating safe and stable socioeconomic conditions in order to promote the return of internally displaced persons and effective land restitution. Mine action was also incorporated into the national living standards improvement strategy 2013-2015 of Tajikistan. Mine action is also included in the United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks for Afghanistan, Mali, South Sudan and Tajikistan. In Somalia, mine action is integrated within the integrated strategic framework that supports the New Deal Compact for Somalia. This will assist the national authority in assuming full

responsibility for the management of explosive hazards and help build national security sector institutions and police capabilities by 2016.

60. During the reporting period, a number of affected States made progress in the development of national mine action legislation. In Afghanistan, mine action legislation has been drafted with the support of the United Nations and is currently pending approval by the Ministry of Justice. In Tajikistan, the United Nations is supporting the development of mine action legislation, drawing on national expertise and experience from other affected States, including Croatia and Lebanon.

61. Since the threat of explosive hazards has an impact on Security Council resolutions, the Mine Action Service is increasingly mandated to support peacekeeping and special political missions, also working in close coordination with other partners in the Office of Rule of Law and Security Institutions of the Department for Peacekeeping Operations. This has enabled freedom of movement for peacekeepers and the delivery of mandated activities. In the Abyei Area, 506 km of roads were surveyed, enabling the deployment of troops and the transport of equipment and supplies. In addition, the African Union Mission in Somalia was provided with force-enabling technical advice and support in response to explosive hazards in all operational sectors and on main supply routes. Through these and similar processes, the Mine Action Service has been actively contributing to peace sustainment and stabilization.

**Internal commitments to strengthening the United Nations capacity in mine action**

62. In addition to the strategic objectives reviewed above, the United Nations has committed itself to a number of initiatives to strengthen its assistance in mine action.

63. The first of these is the transfer of mine action functions to national actors, namely an internal commitment to strategic objective 3, as reported on above, in which significant progress over the past two years has been highlighted.

64. The second is strengthening the United Nations division of labour by making full use of existing mine action coordination mechanisms at the country level. This is being achieved through the Inter-Agency Coordination Group on Mine Action. In addition, the United Nations leads the mine action area of responsibility of the protection cluster in Afghanistan, Chad, Colombia, Mauritania, Myanmar, Pakistan, Senegal, Somalia, South Sudan and the Syrian Arab Republic, ensuring mine action is integrated into humanitarian planning, resource mobilization and response. In countries where the protection cluster is not activated, such as in Nepal and Eritrea, this function is performed by national authorities with the support of the United Nations.

65. The third commitment is to sustain implementation of the United Nations gender guidelines. The monitoring and evaluation mechanism confirms that: 76 per cent of programmes often or almost always consider gender in their programme design. Seventy-five per cent of programmes often or almost always disaggregate survey data by sex and age, and over 90 per cent assemble survey teams of men and women, as appropriate, keeping in mind community demographics and customs. Despite local norms that serve as barriers to women's employment, all United Nations programmes reported that they often or almost always make vacancy

announcements accessible to men and women, that 93 per cent often or almost always make all possible arrangements to accommodate both women's and men's needs in the workplace, and that 77 per cent often or almost always actively encourage women's employment in mine action.

66. In Albania, the United Nations requires all operators to demonstrate gender awareness in their programme design and to indicate how the implementation of such awareness is to be monitored. In Tajikistan, the gender guidelines were translated into the Tajik language and widely used by mine/explosive remnants of war risk education volunteers and community councils in affected communities.

67. To further promote gender mainstreaming in its field programmes, the United Nations partnered with the Gender and Mine Action Programme to conduct baseline surveys on gender mainstreaming and work in partnership with national authorities to develop strategies to improve gender mainstreaming. Since my most recent report, these have been delivered in Somalia, Somaliland and Darfur. In South Sudan, the Gender Mainstreaming Strategy of the Mine Action Programme of South Sudan 2014-2018 resulted in the incorporation of gender mainstreaming into statements of work, contracting documentation and processes for quality assurance, needs assessment and impact monitoring.

68. The fourth initiative is to update the United Nations policy on victim assistance. Consultations on the updated policy are at an advanced stage and the new policy will focus on how the United Nations can best support victims of mines, explosive remnants of war and other explosive hazards. The updated policy will also reflect the key developments of recent years and highlight the significance of integrating victim assistance efforts into broader national frameworks and the importance of sustained services and support to victims.

69. The fifth initiative is to develop national standards and promote compliance with the International Mine Action Standards (IMAS) and International Ammunition Technical Guidelines (IATG). To date, 43 IMAS have been elaborated, 42 have been endorsed and one is in draft form. During the reporting period, standards were reviewed on issues ranging from explosive ordnance disposal following ammunition storage area explosions to underwater survey and clearance and improvised explosive device definitions. Several of the standards have been translated into Arabic, Farsi, French, Spanish and Ukrainian.

70. The sixth initiative is to upgrade the substantive and technical skills of United Nations staff, for which the Organization has developed new mandatory training courses for Operations/Quality Assurance Officers and Programme Officers. To date, 51 Operations Officers and 48 Programme Officers have participated. In addition, all field staff are required to undertake and maintain the Safe and Secure Approaches in Field Environments and the Emergency Trauma Bag training courses. In cooperation with the Department of Safety and Security, 47 United Nations staff members successfully completed the security certification programme, and 11 were trained in hostage incident management.

71. Lastly, the United Nations has committed itself to strengthening resource management, with a focus on transparency. The Mine Action Service, as part of the Secretariat, has transitioned to using International Public Sector Accounting Standards (IPSAS), a robust, publicly recognized set of financial principles to be applied by public sector and non-profit entities, which strengthens accounting and

financial reporting systems. In addition, the Service streamlined business processes in preparation for the management of the United Nations Voluntary Trust Fund for Assistance in Mine Action to be migrated from the Information Management Integrated System to Umoja. The resource management of UNICEF mine action activities is routinely audited, and these audits and other perspectives are presented to the UNICEF Executive Board, as are the results of major evaluations, in line with the principle of transparency. The United Nations is emphasizing to its existing donors the importance of multi-year, unrestricted funding to enable the delivery of mine action in underfunded programmes, the rapid deployment of experts and equipment in response to humanitarian crises and the development of multi-year plans.

72. In 2014, on behalf of the Inter-Agency Coordination Group on Mine Action, the Mine Action Service coordinated and oversaw the process of creating and publishing the Mine Action Project Portfolio for 2015, which presents the mine action needs of more than 20 mine affected countries. This involved designating and managing country Portfolio coordinators from mine-affected countries, who were responsible for working with national authorities, the United Nations and mine action partners to develop and agree upon a country mine action strategy and project proposals. At the Headquarters level, senior staff from UNDP, UNICEF and the Mine Action Service reviewed and approved each country portfolio prior to publishing. As part of this process, the Service also managed the transition to a new software platform and the redesign of the website to provide stakeholders with a more interactive and accessible presentation of mine action funding needs.

## IV. Observations and recommendations

73. Mine action is at the core of the post-conflict humanitarian response, as the contamination of mines and explosive remnants of war (explosive remnants of war) remains a major security issue affecting civilian populations, United Nations operations and the sustainment of global peace and security. Mine action enables the safe flight and return of internally displaced persons and refugees and other durable solutions for such persons, helps protect their freedom of movement and ensures access for humanitarian actors and peacekeepers. The United Nations has proven skills in coordinating and providing a rapid and effective response to emergencies and delivering across the five pillars of mine action: clearance; mine/explosive remnants of war risk education; victim assistance; advocacy; and stockpile destruction. I welcome the work of the Global Protection Cluster's Mine Action Area of Responsibility and encourage partners to support its further development.

74. Requests for United Nations emergency humanitarian assistance are increasing, as explosive remnants of war are an inevitable legacy of armed conflict. I request that Member States support a rapid and flexible response by the United Nations through predictable, non-earmarked funding. I call on those States in a position to do so to fund the mine action component of the United Nations humanitarian response and to support increased mainstreaming of mine action in humanitarian planning, funding appeals and relevant Security Council resolutions and mandates.

75. The rise in the number of intra-State conflicts and the expansion in the range of explosive hazards have presented new challenges. I am particularly concerned

about the use of conventional explosive weapons in populated areas, which has a devastating impact on civilians and leaves a legacy of explosive remnants of war for decades. I reiterate my call on parties to conflict to stop the use of explosive weapons with wide-area effects in populated areas. I also urge Member States to support the efforts of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs to collect examples of good practice and develop guidance in this area. The increasing use of improvised explosive devices in today's conflicts is another worrisome trend, and I call on parties to conflict to desist from the use of such weapons and methods. This issue has become a major aspect of various peace and humanitarian operations in the field.

76. I also call on States to strengthen their efforts to protect civilians from explosive hazards through the fulfilment of their obligations under international humanitarian law. I reiterate my call for the universalization of these critical instruments and for compliance in all aspects.

77. Unplanned explosions resulting from unsafe and unsecured ammunition stockpiles located in populated areas continue to wreak havoc in many countries, regardless of a country's level of development. I call on Member States to improve their ammunition management in line with international standards and reiterate the continued support of the United Nations to such efforts.

78. I commend the Inter-Agency Working Group on Coordination for Mine Action for the progress it has made towards the strategic objectives and internal commitments outlined in the Strategy of the United Nations on Mine Action 2013-2018, including those relating to gender guidelines. I reiterate to Member States the United Nations commitment to the full monitoring and evaluating of the mine action activities of Member States in order to enable the effective implementation of the Strategy.

79. I am satisfied with the progress made by the United Nations in the transfer of ownership to national entities, as well as by United Nations support to South-South cooperation. I also welcome the African Union's Mine Action and Explosive Remnants of War Strategic Framework 2014, highlighting that United Nations collaboration with regional organizations strengthens action and encourages enhanced cooperation.

80. The achievements and progress covered in this report are a testament to the success of international humanitarian law relating to mine action, the commitment of States parties to the relevant conventions, the dedication of the United Nations entities involved in mine action and their partners and the success of enhanced United Nations coordination. I call on States parties to stay committed to the task of ridding the world of anti-personnel landmines and realizing the rights of survivors and victims through political will and financial support.

81. I conclude by expressing my gratitude to the mine action personnel working tirelessly towards the United Nations vision of a world free from the threat of landmines and other explosive remnants of war, including cluster munitions, and I condemn, in the strongest terms, all attacks against them.